Emperor Penguin Colonies of the Ross Sea

Project B-197-M

P. Ponganis, G. Kooyman, S. Barber-Meyer

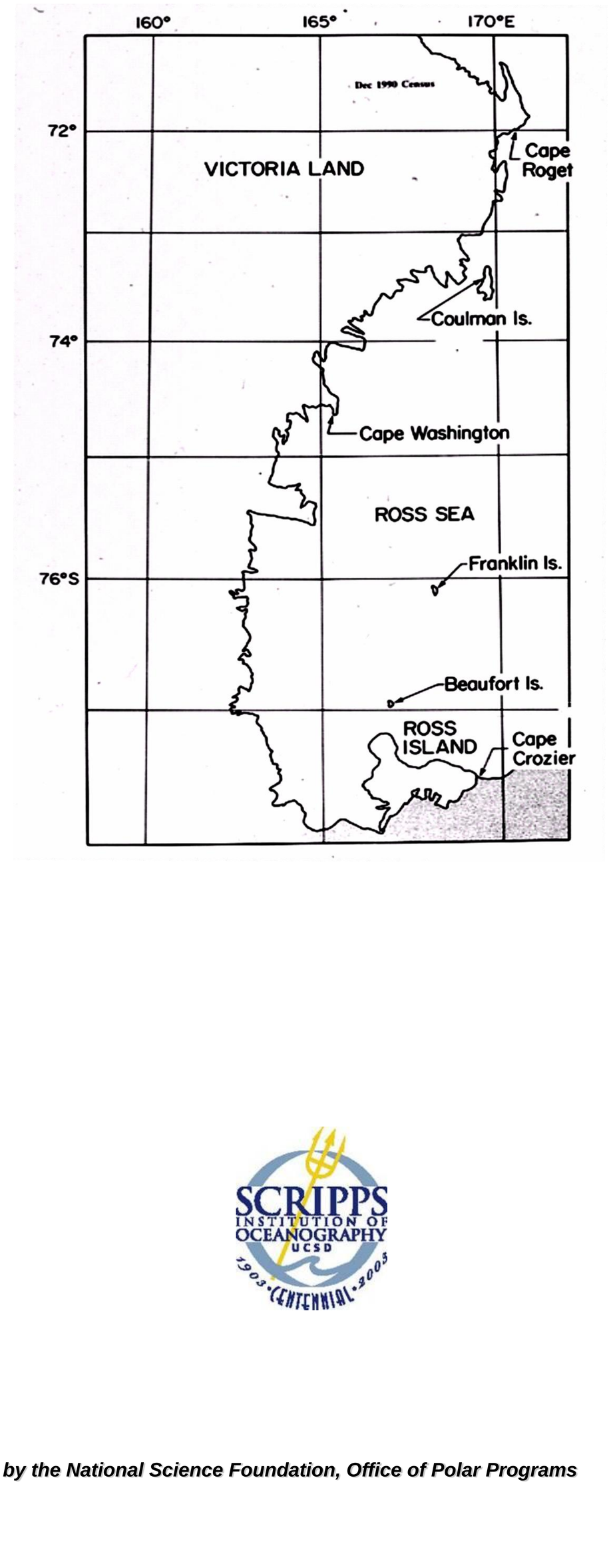
SIO, UCSD, La Jolla, CA

Emperor penguin populations are under pressure from a variety of natural and man-made causes. In this project we continue our long-term census of Ross Sea emperor penguin colonies.

Two factors that can affect the stability of the emperor penguin population include stable sea ice and food availability. Both of these factors are subject to environmental changes and to human perturbations. Therefore, we have monitored the populations at six of the seven colonies in the Ross Sea since the mid-1980s. Cape Colbeck, located far to the east of Ross Island along the Ross Ice Shelf, has rarely been visited.

In 1990, the colonies had the following chick populations: Cape Roget – 6,921, Coulman Island – 27,930, Cape Washington – 23,379, Franklin Island - <2,000, Beaufort Island - <2,000, and Cape Crozier – 324.

Recently, both Beaufort Island and Cape Crozier colonies were devastated by iceberg B15 and its fragments. This year we are continuing our census at these colonies to monitor their recovery and at the four other nearby colonies to determine the general trends in the emperor penguin population in the Ross Sea.



Cape Roget

Coulman Island

Cape Washington

Franklin Island

Beaufort Island

Cape Crozier

This work was funded by the National Science Foundation, Office of Polar Programs

Poster by: K. Ponganis
Printed: 9/24/2010